

# CITY SPACES:

A look into some of the most interesting, stylish, and unique spaces across the MSP metropolis



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A tudor with all the hygge of a North Shore cabin

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Classical aesthetic meets video games



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LUCY HAWTHORNE

**CITY PAGES**

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# North Minneapolis Tudor has all the hygge of a North Shore cabin

Home is where the hygge is.

Especially if your home looks like a perfect North Shore retreat, bright and cozy, with a wood fire crackling and a blueberry galette in the oven. Shauna O'Brien redesigned and renovated her north Minneapolis house to be an ideal place for that Danish practice of enjoying simple pleasures—or partaking in another Nordic tradition, Shauna's favorite, the Swedish fika: a cup of coffee, a sweet treat, and a break from the day.

**Who:**

SHAUNA O'BRIEN

**Where:**

NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

**How long you've lived here:**

TWO YEARS

**What's your favorite thing about your space?**

The tiny Morsø (Danish wood-burning stove). The living room originally had a fireplace that was listed as "wood-burning," but the inspection revealed that it was never operational. There wasn't even a flue. But I realized the space was better suited for a wood stove, which I prefer in any case.

**So you ripped out the fireplace?**

I had the fireplace surround torn out. Some of the bricks were broken or missing, but I wanted to leave it exposed. Serendipitously, a handful of those same bricks were discovered buried in the floor underneath the hearth, so we used them to patch the chimney. Now the stove has a cool backdrop.

**What's your least favorite thing about your space?**

The windows. This is a 1928 Tudor Revival. Historically, it would have had wood, divided-lite windows. At some point they were replaced with low-quality, single-pane, vinyl windows. They're all wrong for the architectural style and Minnesota winters. During the remodel I replaced the kitchen and pantry windows...so two down, 20 to go.

**When you were shopping, what sold you on this house?**

This is my forever house. When I saw it I was like, "I'm gonna be buried in the backyard." I never thought I could afford an English Tudor. You put this in south Minneapolis and it's a \$400,000 house. So it was a space that I could afford and then I could afford to put money into it and remodel the way I wanted.

**Trend you love:**

Dismantling rigid design styles! Fifteen years ago in design school I was told to pick a style and stick to it. Currently, there is a widespread embrace of eclectic design; a rejection of adhering to strict rules and restrictions, and simply creating spaces you love being in. This



doesn't mean anything you do with a space will work well—there are still fundamental elements to consider—it just means personalities are multi-dimensional and your personality should inspire your space.

**Trend you hate:**

It's difficult to really hate something because it likely won't last long. Before online design-based communities like Pinterest, Etsy, and Instagram were available, trends took a while to influence the general public. Now trends sweep the community as quickly as they change. There's nothing wrong with drawing inspiration and taking cues from one another, but living authentically and with intention is paramount. Surround yourself with things you truly love, trends be damned.

**Where do you shop?**

My house is a mixed bag. Many pieces are from antique shops, occasional sales, and thrift stores. I love vintage, handmade items because they have history. American Gothic in Stillwater is a favorite as well as Secondhand Rose, Buffalo Nickel, and Hunt & Gather. The Foundry and Golden Rule are a delight. For ancillary items and kitchenware I shop Homegoods. You can buy a Le Creuset baking dish for \$20! I also shop Etsy regularly. I get all my antique rugs on Etsy.





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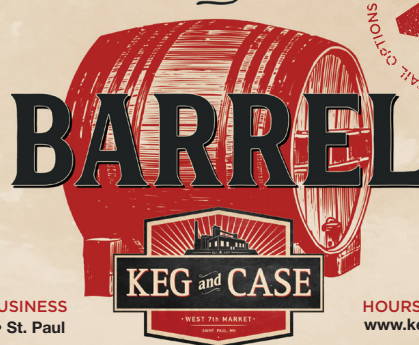
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### Are they affordable?

Yeah. I mean, this one [points to living room rug] was probably... \$300?

### Shut up!

And it's like an 80-year-old handmade rug.

### I'm sorry I yelled "shut up" at you, I'm just amazed. Rugs are so expensive!

No, that's how I feel when I'm online! I'm seeing these deals and I'm like, "Shut up! Order!"

### You mentioned "occasional sales"—what are those?

There's probably five to seven shops out there that once a month, the first Thursday through Sunday they open their doors and people just go crazy. They go in and raid all their good stuff. And then the stores close shop and use that time to go to other antique dealers and get pieces; sometimes they go and find pieces in an alley and refinish them so they're still affordable but repurposed.

### You've already done so much to the house, but if you had the budget, what would you do next?

Finish the attic! It's high-priority on the remodeling list. The attic and the veranda are my favorite existing spaces in the house. The attic runs the entire length of the house and has a cathedral ceiling. I fantasize about wide plank pine floors and white v-groove wall paneling. And a hammock.

### What do you like to show off most in your space?

Definitely the pantry. It's a real charmer. The space was originally a larger breakfast nook with built-in benches. I didn't need another seating area, but I did desperately want a walk-in pantry. I had the walls furred out to create a narrow, arched opening, added vintage-inspired wallpaper, and lined it with shelving. The interior window was purchased a decade ago from an occasional sale. It took me that long to find a home for it.

I also love entertaining, and this [living room, dining room, kitchen] area is really open and conducive to entertaining. I can cook while people hang out or watch TV. The veranda is magical in the summertime. Vines crawl up the outside. It's like a secret garden out there.

### What's your best memory here?

I recently threw a party celebrating the importance of women and friendship, and brought together my best girlfriends from various friendship circles. It was a come-as-you-are-happiest party, which meant they showed up in everything from formal gowns to jeans and sweaters. The night was pure celebration. We laughed so hard our faces hurt, we made speeches and told stories, we happy-cried, ukuleles came out and we sang, and yes, we drank all the wine. That's what home means to me: an inviting space that holds the people and treasures I love.






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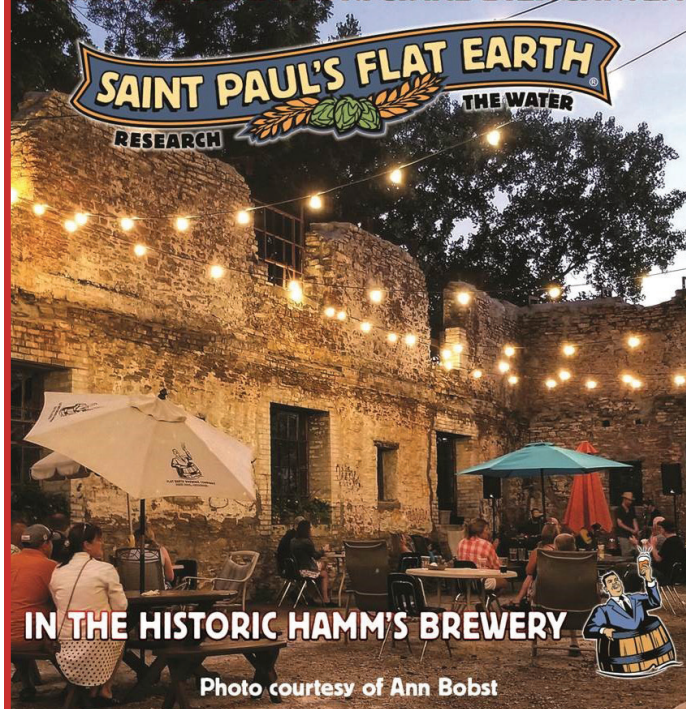
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# This new construction home in Fridley has old school charms



Building a new home is exciting. Building a new home that doesn't have that generic, showroom feel is a challenge.

Lea Johnson and Michael Crockett rose to the occasion with their 4-bedroom family home in Fridley. They've infused their shiny new house with vintage pieces and personal flair to make it feel more like, well, home.

**Who:**

LEA JOHNSON AND MICHAEL CROCKETT

**Where:**

FRIDLEY

**How long you've lived here:**

TWO YEARS

***I think this is the first home we've toured that's a new build.***

**Lea:** It's funny. We weren't looking to build. We actually were looking for an older home in Minneapolis. We just kept getting outbid, it was crazy. Then you remember those tornadoes hit? It opened up a bunch of lots and we tried really hard to get one of those. One day we were driving by here and saw two or three lots available. I didn't even realize when I was growing up, the family that adopted me, our first home was in Fridley. So it's kind of funny to come full circle.

***That's such a sweet detail! Did you design the home?***

I did! I tried to make it look older. I love that classic 1920s home that you find in the city. So I tried to bring that in with the piano windows and the floor and the simple molding and cabinetry. Just to add some character into new construction is kind of tough.



***It's probably also why you love to go thrifting.***

Yeah, most of the art in here is thrifted, the prints and the paintings. But then the chairs are Target and the sofa is West Elm and that table is just Ikea.

***So it's a solid mix. Where do you like to shop?***

Golden Age Design is my favorite. I love Schoolhouse Electric in Portland. And of course Ikea is another favorite of mine. I can't ever knock Ikea.

***You've got a nice blend of high and low, old and new.***

I love not trying to stay in one style. Sometimes I feel like people walk in and think "What the f? This is a hodge-podge of stuff."





**No way. Not a chance.**

If something looks cool to me, I'll grab it, but I try to find pieces that have some kind of meaning. [She points to an intricately carved wooden object.] Like I loved these when I was growing up. It's a German nativity set. The candles, when they're lit make the fans spin around which in turn makes all the little people move. They're so expensive when you get a new one, but I found that one at a thrift store for 8 bucks.

**Nice. What about this painting? It's beautiful.**

I found that on Craigslist! A friend put a picture of this part of the house on Instagram the other day and someone direct messaged her and said, "My wife used to have a painting just like that and she sold it on Craigslist a few years ago!" And I said, "That was me! I bought it!" My husband hates it. My son and my husband. They think it's creepy-looking and threatened to throw it in the neighbor's bonfire.

**I, for one, am glad they did not. What's your favorite thing about your home?**

Really making it ours was huge. Instead of moving into a space and making it yours, we created a space that works for our family.

**What's your least favorite thing?**

I wish I'd done a bigger laundry room. We wanted to put a deck off this back door, but once we got the washing machine in, we realized we couldn't even open that door.

**Oh no! The washer/dryer juts out and blocks the door from opening!**

It's one of those things you don't realize until after the house is built—I didn't account for the space we needed behind the washer and dryer. We'll probably take the door out and put in a tall window. And then we'd put in a door in the garage that leads to the backyard.

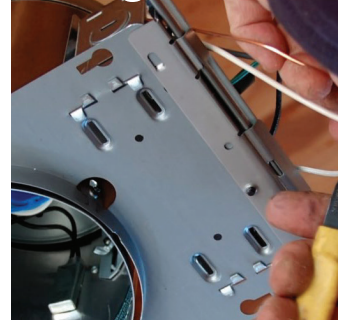
**What's one of your fondest memories in this house?**

It took a long time to build, but getting the input from our family and knowing, "This is it, this is our forever home." Knowing that someday our kids can take it and we'll downsize and we're not just going to keep hopping around.



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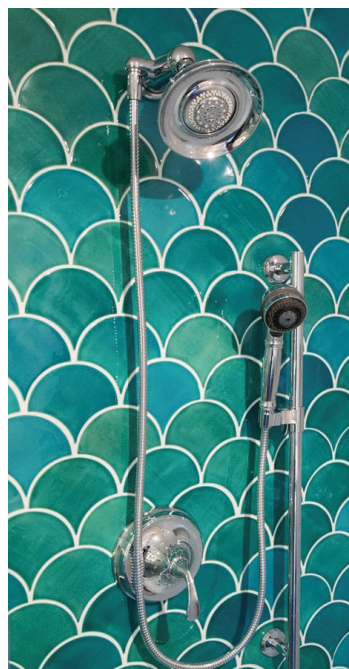


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## Handmade furniture brings joy and history into Falcon Heights home

**Who:**

ELIZABETH AND JOSH PENROD

**Where:**

FALCON HEIGHTS

**How long you've lived here:**

FOUR AND A HALF YEARS



**What a beautiful home. It all looks very tailored to you—what sort of shape was it in when you moved in?**

**Elizabeth:** It was in really good shape. The previous owners had done a few bigger projects—building the garage, new siding, new countertops in the kitchen. But their style was not our style. So I've painted every room in the house as well as all the trim in the house. And most of the rooms I've painted twice to be honest. When we first moved in the back entry and the kitchen were this green color and our kids were very young at the time and I really didn't want to look at any more of that shade of green...

**Understandable!**

So I painted those rooms immediately. We recently painted the dining room a light pink color, just to try it, and that lasted maybe two weeks. I'm not afraid to try anything, but once it goes up I can pretty quickly go, "Yeah, no I don't think that's going to work for us."

**Wow. Maybe this is sheer laziness, but the thought of putting up a paint color and changing my mind gives me so much anxiety. I commend you on your bravery.**

For me, it's more like I can't look at it another minute, I have to change it. I actually painted our master bedroom navy blue and I had this whole mood board with how I wanted it to look. The first morning I woke up and it was navy blue, I was like, "Oh no I can't wake up in this room." It was just so harsh with the white trim.





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**You take risks! That's very admirable. So what do you like most about your house?**

Honestly, the thing I love most is the neighborhood. This wasn't our first choice house. We wrote up an offer for a house in St. Paul and I really wanted that one. This house felt okay. But my husband could really see the potential in the neighborhood and loved the tree-lined streets. Now I joke that he can move with his next wife because I'm so happy here.

**What would you change about this space if you could?**

We would change the back entry. As the kids are getting older – with their shoes and their backpacks and stuff – it's a little tricky. Everyone stops in that tiny little space. So we'd love to add something on to the entire back of the house that would connect to the kitchen and to the dining room here. We would add actually to the basement, first, and second floor. My parents come and stay with us about two weeks at a time, five or six times a year. So they come and stay in the basement where they can kind of take over that space. But we'd really love to give them a proper bedroom down there where they can close the door. And then upstairs we'd add another bathroom.

**Where do you get your design inspiration?**

I read a fair amount of home design blogs and DIY blogs. We've moved so much that we've had to adapt and I really try to do that on a budget. Most of our things come from Craigslist or Target or I make them. My dad builds furniture and my mom is really creative and they passed that down to me. So I actually rebuilt these bookcases in the living room and my dad and I made this window bench and that desktop. In every room there's something we built.

**It really feels like everything is custom fit for your home.**

And that's a thing that really takes time. Until you really live in a house and see how you use it and figure out what you need. But as far as my style choices, I've figured out that I gravitate toward geometric prints, bold florals, and neutrals with accents.

**What's one of your most prized possessions in your home?**

We have a table upstairs that belonged to my grandparents and it was a gift for our wedding so I really cherish it. The bed and dresser in my daughter's room were also my grandmother's. And then anything my dad made. He made the solid cherry dresser in our bedroom and then he made a matching mirror for our wedding anniversary. He made one of the bookcases upstairs and a toy chest and a doll cradle for my daughter, and together we made my son's bed.

**That's so incredible.**

Yeah. We've been very fortunate to have so many family pieces and that my parents have been so generous.

**And that they've held onto all those heirloom pieces! Now you and your dad are adding to the family's collection.**

We're trying to! I really enjoy it. It's fun to think about what the kids might like and what they might keep.

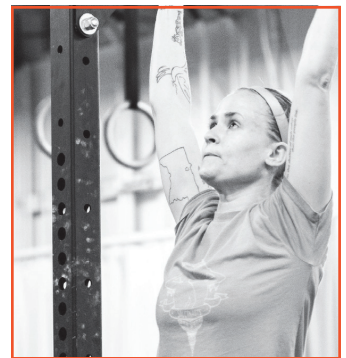


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## Classical aesthetic meets video games at this romantic St. Paul pad

What happens when two people decide to move in together and one is a reincarnated Liberace and the other is more of a modernist gamer?

Beautiful things, it turns out. The upstairs unit of this St. Paul triplex houses all the treasures and styles of John and Zach—without either cowing to the other. An illustration of a Kim Kardashian meme posts up feet away from a beautiful grandfather clock. Lil Yachty mingles with grandma's buffet. It's magical to witness how good taste can span many styles.

### **Who:**

JOHN SAND AND ZACH CAMPBELL

### **Where:**

ST. PAUL

### **How long you've lived here:**

ELEVEN MONTHS

### **What is your favorite thing about this apartment?**

**John:** I love the natural woodwork. This was built in 1912 and almost everything is original. There's very little except the kitchen that we had to fix up.

### **What is your least favorite thing about the space?**

**John:** The windows. I replaced all the windows upstairs but down here it's kind of hodge-podge because some of the windows were replaced with ones that match the style of the home, and some of them are the original windows, but then there are these here that are icky vinyl windows.

### **You replaced all those windows and you also fixed up the kitchen? You two are handy!**

**John:** My uncle is a contractor, so he and my dad and Zach – he's really handy, too – we all did the windows upstairs. In the kitchen, we tore out everything. Nothing is the same except the windows. Nothing was salvageable. There were particle board cabinets that went all the way up to the ceiling that were really oppressive. Wait, what is your favorite thing about the space? Besides me living here obviously.

**Zach:** Yeah, it's distinctly John. Probably what I like most the space about it is John and I, our aesthetics, combined. The space is very classical in a lot of ways, but it's also really modern. There's a lot of small video game touches and digital touches. I like the way it all gets wrapped together without any element overpowering. It truly feels like the two of us together.

### **So who is more classical and who is more modern?**

**John:** I say I am like the reincarnation of Liberace. Just like velvet everywhere, and I could have a diamond-encrusted bathtub. I've actually researched it so that's not a joke. I can't afford it at the moment.



### **Oh, I believe you. Wait, what is this? It's sort of an end table, but it's made of...lead pipes?**

**John:** Oh yeah, I got it at Beckon. The woman who owns the store saw someone throwing it away at some industrial scrap yard. I walked in as she was bringing it in and she was like, "You want it?" I gave her \$50 for it.



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**What!? That's such a good deal!!**

**John:** Yes, but getting it here? It's steel and weighs 300 pounds.

**Zach:** It's so heavy and sleek and there's nothing to grab onto.

**John:** We had to take like four or five breaks getting it up the stairs.

**I appreciate your dedication. What about the rest of your amazing furniture?**

**John:** I love getting stuff from grandparents. This is my grandfather's grandfather clock. It's one of those ones where you pull down on these chains and the weights are what drive the clock. And this is my mom's grandma's buffet. It's in kind of rough shape, but I actually don't mind. This table is from a store in Rogers, MN, just a tiny town where there's a corner of four antique stores next to each other; it was in a basement and it was \$30. This is an antique church pew. My mom used to weirdly collect church pews and my dad would cut them down to be benches. But then we just had these benches all over our house that were full of things. Like, this one is the purse bench, and there were 30 purses on it. So, that's where I got my collector mentality.



**But you've shown so much restraint! For someone who came from a house of benches, you have only one that I can see. What about this?**

**Zach:** I made this for John for Valentine's Day. It's a cut-out of our silhouettes. It's got our two favorite flowers on it as well; mine is the orchid and John's is the Narcissus.

**John:** Yeah, it's a fancy daffodil and also I'm a narcissist.

**Perfect! What's a design trend you love?**

**John:** I love a bold choice. I love taking risks.

**Zach:** I really like the trend of rebooting. Using something classical in a new way. I don't really favor minimalist clean design. I like a lot of small touches everywhere and old and new elements combined together. Minimalism is nothing that either of us could manage in our lives.

**John:** Ha, yeah. I remember when I was in college I saw a picture of Alexander Wang's loft and it was just a huge cement room with a single black Chesterfield couch in it and I was like, "That's awesome." But then I looked around and was like, "I will never be able to achieve that."

**Now, John, you own the triplex. What made you pick this house? Were you thinking you wanted to live in St. Paul?**

**John:** No, I actually wasn't looking in St. Paul. I told my realtor under no circumstances would I move to St. Paul. But she called me one day and said to come look at this place. It went on the market on a Friday, I came to look at it on a Sunday and I was like, "Honestly, for how old it is, it's in amazing shape. And I wouldn't have to make any structural changes. Like, I walked in and it was all the wrong colors, all the wrong furniture, but it felt completely right. And then I was driving through this neighborhood and was like, "Oh St. Paul is actually awesome?"

**So you got it!**

**John:** Well, so the woman who owned it had lived here for 25 years and essentially it was only on the market for three days and there were 20 offers. I was not the highest bid by far, but she wanted to sell it to someone who was going to live here and not to a development company. So she took a hit, honestly, to let me buy it from her and I'm so grateful.

**She'd be very proud I think.**

**John:** I hope so!

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